

7: Thompson--371-372

J-4

(no date) 1937

Laotians

116, 565, ~~567~~, 177.56

France

636.56

"The people were simply divided into slaves and freemen. Of the former there were three kinds: slaves for debt, by sale, or by capture. Slave-trading used to be enormously profitable, for the offspring of slaves were born into perpetual slavery. In 1880 the King of Siam made a generous reform. The descendants of slaves were henceforth to be freemen, and it was made much easier for debt slaves to buy their freedom. No mention was made, however, of captured slaves, but severe penalties were meted out to men convicted of slave-trading. One of the first steps taken by the French was the abolition of the slave trade, despite its affecting important Laotian, Cambodian, Siamese, and even Burmese commercial interests. Next, debt slavery was attacked in 1896, and for this Tournier found an ingenious solution. Special attention [372] was paid to the Khas, who lived in a state of serfdom, and this provoked a series of revolts. Their enfranchisement was begun in 1898, and nowadays a form of patron-client relationship has been evolved, but the bond is easy. It is almost impossible to wipe the slate clean, for many of the slaves resist change, since it is an easier way of getting rid of a debt than by working as freemen."

"Informer times the men of the conquering race made inroads into the Kas villages and carried off a number of the inhabitants as slaves, the males being seized in preference to the females, while with the people of the plain the reverse was the case. Now the king has abolished slavery in theory, though in reality it still exists; (1) but

1. Slavery as practised upon the Kas is regarded as legal among the Laotians; a father who is poor and has a large family, often sells one or two of his sons, at the rate of fifteen rupees if they are very young, and of from twenty to forty for adults. They are then employed as boatmen.

the armed raids are not of frequent occurrence. Here, as is the case with certain European nations upon the coast of Africa, who claim [306] to be fighting the battle of liberty, the term forced labour is substituted for slavery, because it sounds better. I do not wish to criticise the generous sentiments which humanitarian ideas have evoked against slavery, but I am inclined to ask myself whether, taking everything into account, this condition is not often preferable for the people of the inferior races to liberty without the means of livelihood.

I was talking with a young slave who had been purchased by the mother-in-law of one of our interpreters. and he did not seem at all desirous of being freed. His parents, too

10: d'Orleans--305-306

T-3 (1891-92) 1894

Laos-2

116, 563, 567, 721

poor to support him, had sold him, he was well-fed and happy with his masters, and asked for nothing better. "

23: Franck--330[2]
116, 291, 301, 567

T-2

(1924) 1926

Laotians
Ethnic subgroup

"Daylight showed the dense vegetation deeply green, a land as far from China as if we were on another continent, and disclosed our dozen carriers to be Kha wild from the mountains, picturesque figures even in a land as out of the ordinary as Laos.

Instead of tattooed pants of cloth sampots these primitive fellows wore short cloth breeches like running-pants, and some of them had more or less of an upper garment also. They showed no tattooing, or at least very little, but rattled with bracelets of glass and other cheap materials, and had large earrings of all shapes, preferably not mates and if possible utterly unlike on the two sides of the same head. The few who did not have earrings put flowers or vine strings or leaves in the holes in their ears to keep them ready for more prosperous times. They had the eyes and the ways of the real wild man; yet, being former slaves, they were more docile than the Laosians or Pwun."

23: Franck--331
116, 101, 567

T-2

(1924) 1926

Laotians
Ethnic subgroup

"The Kha are a hill people who made complete submission to the former rulers of Luang Prabang, admitting themselves slaves, and now they accept the present monarch as king and are loyal to him, lending help of this kind upon royal demand, though one could not hire them as carriers in the ordinary way."

565 The common people, kind and carefree in character, roamed
175* over the country in all directions as easy-going masters, leaving
/462/ household tasks to the women and the work of the fields to dependents
of an inferior race or to slaves. They were excellent boatmen and
traders rather than farmers, so that they liked to perform the function
of peddlers and served as a link between the multiple /55/ varieties
of mankind which inhabited Lan-Xang.

567 Slavery existed--slaves could be obtained through capture, as
175* the result of debt or through trade--and brought high profits to those
563 who engaged in this traffic. In the region of Muong-Swa there was
also a kind of serfdom which was applied to certain Kha tribes placed
under the patronage of the king, the princes or the chief representatives
of the nobility.

565 But if we consider the gentle and happy temperament of this
175* people whose good humor made up for everything, we are justified
in believing that the relations between the various social levels must
have been free of any harshness.

191 They spoke a dialect derived from the language which was im-
ported into the basin of the Ménam by Rama Khamheng at the end
of the thirteenth century and which was itself derived from the
771 graphs of India (1). They practiced orthodox Buddhism together
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554 1. Cf. Mission Pavie, op. cit. /Etudes diverses, Vol. II,
"Recherches sur l'Histoire du Cambodge du Laos et du
Siam"/ Inscription of Sukhothai translated by Father
Schmitt, p. 192: "It was in (1287 A. D.) that the king
Rama-Khameng summoned a teacher who created Thai
writing."

with the cult of the "Phi" or Genii which represented for them the
beneficent or maleficent forces of Nature. The bonzes were of
comparatively pure morals amidst these peoples for whom enjoyment
and pleasure were, when /56/ all is considered, the true gods. Al-
though they were fairly ignorant and recited their prayers in Pali
/782/ without understanding them, they did not lack a certain air of
nobility. They also enjoyed a high regard and had as much favor
as they could desire. The bonzeries¹ which were built near the pagodas
were at once places of inviolable asylum, schools frequented by all
the children of the village, and workshops where trades could be
learned.

[114]

of what has been observed, and because no better expression of the facts could be hoped for.

THE THAI RACE

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"Laotians. Of all the Thais, the Laotian is the one who has remained the purest, although he has a much higher proportion of Aryan blood than the other varieties, with the exception of the Lus. Fairly tall in stature, his hair cut short, elegant in his movements and more refined than all the other inhabitants of the land, he is the aristocratic type of Laos. His upbringing, his education, his religion and even his vices have a mark of distinction which make them stand out above those of his neighbors. An excellent boatman, and a trader rather than a farmer, he is the one who seems the master of the land, as much by virtue of his commercial aptitudes as by the ease with which he ranges the country. Mounted on his long and narrow shaped pirogue, made in one piece of a tree trunk hollowed out by fire, he goes great distances to visit peoples of the most varied races [175] [Illustration] [176] [Blank page] [177] and serves as a link between all the human varieties which populate Laos. He is at home and at his ease everywhere, standing out clearly above all his countrymen in this respect.

[361]

[241]

[567]

"The Laotian prefers to settle along navigable watercourses and in proximity to plains of ricefields. He is glad to have his land worked by mercenaries or by dependents of inferior race, and sometimes by slaves (at least before our arrival). He himself, with quite an extensive knowledge of the needs and resources of the other inhabitants of the land, particularly likes to traffic in all kinds of merchandise. He it is who goes to buy forest products and cereal grains on the spot from the mountainfolk or from sedentary farmers, and sells them cloth, salt, tobacco, earthenware, farming implements etc. in exchange. He it is who exports the products of Laos to neighboring countries and brings back the things which Laotian industry cannot produce. His business as a commercial traveler, which he likes and which gives him a good standard of living, occupies him for only a few months of the year but brings him into contact with all the neighboring peoples and also with the Europeans and Chinese in the Siamese, Annamite and Cochinchinese trading posts. Thence arises his veneer of civilization which strikes one at first glance.

[439]

Kha

result. But the Kha ideal is to possess a battery of gongs of different sizes and timbres, and with these they manage to obtain quite perfect chords. 533

Industry. Withdrawn in their mountains where they live in small isolated groups, the Khas use their leisure time to make many basket-work and hollow-ware products which have a mark of elegance and a great deal of delicacy. Other tribes make paper from wood pulp, weave mats from rattan and bamboo bark, etc. They use all these products in trade. 433

Finally, certain Khas exploit deposits of iron ore and transform it into farming implements, while others wash gold-bearing sands. 316

In general, although the Khas are industrious they work only to procure what is strictly indispensable. They cannot resign themselves to staying away from home for any length of time and dread any stay in the low country, which they say is unhealthy for them. Since they have particular aptitudes for woodcutting, however, they have been successfully employed to cut teak wood in the forests on the right bank of the Mekong which are situated in Siamese territory. But it must be admitted that there they are in mountainous country and in the midst of forests, as in their native region. 461 [313]

The Khas of southern Laos. In southern Laos Khas are found who differ very little from those of Upper Laos. We shall not concern ourselves with them, but shall deal briefly with the many more numerous ones who have particular mores and customs.

The Djarais, the Rades, the Bahnars, the Cedangs, the Peunongs, the Rognas (1), etc. are the principal types of these Kha tribes, [619]

(1) See Appendix XVIII.

which for the most part are still independent.

These people are proud, large and muscular, supple, trained in all forms of bodily exercise, bold, warlike and brave. 181

These qualities, moreover, have been developed by their peculiar way of [257] [Illustration] [258] [Blank page] [259] life. 567
Accustomed to hunting slaves from which they extracted large profits by selling them on the banks of the Mekong, these Khas have had to resort to continual expeditions in order to obtain their human game. 721

For many long years, in fact, they could acquire [Illustration here] the gongs, buffalo, metals, textiles, etc. which they needed only by selling captives, generally Annamites, whom they went and 567

caught even on the other side of the watershed and then delivered as slaves to the Burmese, Siamese, Cambodian and Laotian merchants of the low country. The barbarity of their mores has been greatly lessened since our arrival in Laos, but traces of it still exist and manifest themselves in rivalries and attacks between tribes. The police force which [260] we have organized in the land in the form of a native militia, the influence of the missionaries who have settled among the turbulent Khas, and also the help and example of the tribes which have submitted to our tutelary authority will soon cause this abnormal state of things to disappear. Finally, our increasingly effective occupation of the land, which has been completed by the organization of the province of Darlac, and the strict protectorate which we exercise over Cambodia, the chief purchaser of slaves, have begun to bring order in an effective fashion to this shameful traffic in human flesh (1).

(1) See § I of Chapter XI.

It should be noted that the Djarais and the Rades are the only Khas who speak Cham, that is to say a greatly corrupted Malay tongue which they have preserved for centuries.

The men's clothing consists of a loin-cloth, and that of the women consists only of a short skirt knotted around the waist or under the armpits, the torso left bare.

Both men and women have long hair wound in a coil. Both sexes, but mainly the men, wear jewels of a crude shape, made of tin or brass, in the form of bracelets, neckbands, ear pendants or cylinders and hairpins. They are also very fond of glass bead necklaces.

These Khas smoke tobacco, either dried or green, as well as bamboo shavings impregnated with nicotine. They make terra cotta pipes with highly worked bowls and also use imported brass pipes. They do not blacken their teeth.

From the point of view of diet and housing, practically the same conditions obtain as we have seen above except that the houses are built with greater care and arranged in the form of a circular camp.

In the middle of Cedang and Rognao villages there is a large house some twenty to thirty meters long by twelve to fifteen meters wide, with a high pointed roof. This is the common house where all the boys of the locality live from the age of nine or ten until the day of their marriage.

505 Large quantities of nep (rice suitable
438 for making alcohol), hides, horn, cardamom, wax, benzoin, various
gums, etc. were shipped from Bassac, from Pakse, from Savannakhet,
from Vien-Tiane and from other Laotian centers which had formerly
traded exclusively with Bangkok by way of the Nongkay-Outaradit
route on the Menam and by the Korat route on the Se-Moun.

505 "Passenger traffic, which was almost nil when the new services
484 were established, is increasing every day. The natives are beginning
to become familiar with this rapid, convenient and inexpensive man-
ner of traveling which the steamship represents and they are making
more frequent use thereof, a fact which can only contribute to the
broadening of relations between the various posts scattered along the
great river and increase trade in their products of all kinds" (1).

(1) See, in Appendix XXX, the transport rates between France
and Indo-China and between Saigon and Laos.

[487]

[Illustration at top of page]

CHAPTER XI

1. SOCIAL STATUS. SLAVERY

[565] Upon our arrival in Laos, we found a hierarchial society com-
prised of nobles, commoners and slaves. We could not do better than
• 567 to preserve all features of the political, social and administrative
178 organization just as it had been. In this respect we took our inspira-
177 tion from our predecessors the Siamese, leaving our new subjects the
utmost liberty and respecting their traditions, customs and mores in-
sofar as these were compatible with our own institutions.

Thus we were at times forced to recall certain native officials
who had compromised themselves with the Siamese, or who through
their exactions had made themselves unworthy of their office. More-
over, we have always acted tactfully and mildly, [488] leaving the
choice of officials to election, in accordance with custom.

But above all, we took radical measures by completely sup-
pressing the slave trade and by regularizing a very mild form of
slavery for debt.

[556] There used to be slavery in Laos, as in Siam, in the form of
slavery by capture, by purchase and for debt. It yielded high profits
for those who engaged in the traffic, for the children and grandchildren
of slaves were slaves themselves at birth, a fact which increased the
fortunes of their masters to that extent.

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426 When he mounted the throne, the present king of Siam promulgated a generous law relative to slavery to celebrate his accession. This was the "Pi-Marong" law (that is to say, the law of the year "Pi-Marong," or 1880). If it had freed all the slaves in a block, it would have brought about recriminations and turned many wealthy Siamese, whose wealth lay mainly in troops of slaves, against the royal family. It therefore does not mention slaves for debt in the strict sense, and is concerned only with the status of their children and grandchildren. The former are declared to be free at the age of 21, and the latter at birth. As for the man who becomes a slave through debt, he cannot gain freedom through his work, since the latter is regarded as the equivalent of interest on the sum borrowed or the purchase price, if he should happen to change masters. If this sum is less than 56 ticals (1) in the case of men, and 48 ticals for

(1) The tical is worth 1.50 francs.

women, however, the slave is merely a debtor and can then redeem himself by his labor.

The reader will also note that this law makes no mention of slaves by capture. But the Siamese code does not recognize any such, and even levies extremely severe penalties on ravishers and sellers.

In 1893, when the Franco-Siamese treaty granted us the territory of Laos which was situated on the left bank of the Mekong, the conditions of slavery were therefore first of all what the "Pi-Marong" law, which was generally well applied, had made them, and secondly as determined by the ordinances of the code governing slave trading, which had partly failed to have any effect.

Our first concern was thus the radical suppression of the traffic [489] in human flesh, which was enriching a few Siamese, Cambodian and Laotian mandarins, and even some Burmese who were engaging in this sort of trade.

But this was not all. Once the slave trade was abolished, slavery for debt remained. It was left for our administration to regulate this question in a spirit of humanity and justice as soon as it felt sufficiently entrenched in the land and was able to begin the necessary investigations.

It is our pleasure here to pay homage to the generous sentiments and broad views of Lieutenant Colonel Tournier, then Superior Commandant of Lower Laos, who set forth the situation of slavery in Laos

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426 as early as March of 1896, in a report which we believe it will be of value to reproduce in part, as well as a code of rules as ingenious as they were just governing slavery for debt (1).

(1) See Appendix XXVIII.

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563 Finally, there is a kind of serfdom in Laos which is applied to certain Kha tribes. Thus in the kingdom of Luang-Prabang, subsequent to revolts, entire tribes of Khas were reduced to a state of serfdom and placed under the patronage of the king, of princes, or of the principal members of the nobility. In 1894 our administration undertook to liberate these Khas, who are completely free today. In southern Laos most of these latter are still the clients of a few nobles or Laotian officials, but the guardianship is a gentle one which they can abandon and resume at will.

2. POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

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642 Under our control, as has been noted above, the political organization of Laos has remained what it was before 1893. We have respected the customs and local traditions, and we govern through the native administration in which all the machinery has been retained.
643 [490] The following is a nearly complete list of all the officials in a large Muong such as the kingdom of Luang-Prabang or of Bassac (1)

(1) The kingdom of Luang-Prabang is situated on both banks of the Mekong, but the king resides on the left bank at Luang-Prabang and is consequently dependent on the French authorities. The kingdom of Bassac is today wholly on the right bank, and the king of Bassac falls under Siamese domination. The title of king is sometimes given also to the "Tiao-Fa" or head of the province of Muong-Sing. The head of a muong in the Sib-Song-Pahn-Na may be a "Tso-boua," a "Phya-Hua" or a "Sen-Houi-Fa," depending on his importance.

At the head are the Kings, two in number:

Somdet-Phra-Tiao or Tiao-Tsi-Vite-Louang, first king, great master of existences.

644 Tiao-Maha-Oupahat or Tiao-Tsi-Vite-Vang-Na, second king, great master responsible for conservation of property. [Illustration here]

China and Indo-China (1).

[13] (1) E. Picanon, Le Laos français. 1901, Challamel. [Paris]

II

173 Laos, Thais and Khas. Although the Laotian legends
563 attribute the same origin to all of these (Mucng-Theng or Dien-Bien-
144 Phu) and say that they all came from the same "gourd" (Nam-Tao-
Phoun), it is hardly likely that the Laotians and the Khas have a
common origin. Indeed, the characteristics which serve to distinguish
the two races are too numerous and too marked, both from the point
of view of the racial types themselves and as regards language, mores
and religious beliefs.

144 Nor can it be affirmed that the Khas are the representatives of
174 the aboriginal population, for before any of their people had mounted
the throne of Luang-Prabang, six kings foreign to their race had al-
ready occupied it--if we may regard the list of the first kings of the
land which is preserved in the Phong-Sa Va-Dan (annals of the king-
dom) as correct--and of these conquering princes the first is said to
have come from India, and the second from Cambodia.

169 In any case, the Khas are said to have preceded the Laotians
in the land, and it was not until the reign of their fourth and last
king that they are supposed to have been conquered and driven out
or enslaved by the Laotians, who had come down from Dien-Bien-
Phu. Since that time, and despite many revolts of which the last
is almost recent, the Khas have never ceased being "a folk talliable
and liable to forced labor at pleasure" for their vanquishers, and their
name has become a synonym for a low person or slave in the current
idiom. Not until 1895 were the Khas once and for all freed--freed
• 561 is perhaps not the word, for in the strict sense they were never slaves--
or at least summoned to enjoy a system of rule similar to that of the
other natives and which left no margin for arbitrariness and vexations.

173 In designating Dien-Bien-Phu as the cradle of the Laotian people,
or at least in attributing to the Laotians and the Thais a common
origin, legend seems to be in agreement with reality. There are in-
deed many points of resemblance and contact between the two peoples.
The type is invariably the same, although finer in the native of Luang-
Prabang than in the native of Lai-Chau or Dien-Bien-Phu. Not more
175 than two hundred years ago the Laotians still wore, like the black
291 Thais, the Annamite costume and their hair wound in a coil. It
177 was doubtless after contact with the Siamese--who had themselves

563 in a few particulars. They all inhabit the peaks of mountains, where they generally engage in the cultivation of poppies and maize.

[439]
[241] Hos. The Hos are genuine Chinese who came in with the caravans from Yunnan and settled in the land to engage in trade or to grow cotton (1).

(1) According to a monograph by Government Commissioner Grand.

[105]

APPENDIX XVIII

NOTE ON THE EASTERN REGION OF LOWER LAOS (1)

[113] (1) Extract from a report by Colonel Tournier, Superior Commandant of Lower Laos. (Bulletin Economique de l'Indo-Chine, 1900, No. 19.)

PRESENT STATUS OF THE DIFFERENT KHA TRIBES

563 TRIBES LIVING ON THE GREAT ANNAMITIC CHAIN. 1. The tribe Tha-Hoi may be regarded as being entirely pacified. It is a dependency of both Annam and Laos, but the spheres of influence of the two lands were perfectly delimited at the time of the establishment by Annam of the administrative post in Lao-Bao.

2. The Khon-Tou-Khas, the Ve-Khas and the Alak Khas are completely pacified and extremely tranquil. They are dependencies of Saravane.

Between the high valleys of the Se-Kemane and the Sesame (where the word Legnau, which is unknown in the region, is found on the Pavie map), there is an absolutely deserted region which serves as a buffer between the abovementioned tribes and the Cedangs.

[316]
563 3. The great tribe of the Cedangs, so far unconquerable. It occupies both sides of the chain, and its villages are situated in extremely difficult positions. The land is very poor, and until the last few years, besides the iron deposits which they work, their real commerce was the slave trade. All the Annamite slaves of the Mekong valley, both on the left bank and the right, came from raids made by these tribes in Annamite territory, even down as far as the sea. The abolition of slavery in Laos was a great blow to them, but since it is absolutely necessary for them to procure buffalo and oxen in order to live and especially for their superstitious practices, they still continue to make occasional captures in Annam and find a market for

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563 their prisoners among the Djarals. This state of affairs cannot go on
567 [106] indefinitely, and after settling the question of the Djarals which
is more urgent, it will be necessary for Annam and Laos to pacify
these tribes by a common agreement.

563 4. Rognao, Bahnar, Goelar and Habau Khas. These tribes, over
797 whom the missionaries exercise moral authority and many of whose
villages are Catholic, can be regarded as pacified even though they
do not pay any tribute. I have previously explained why it would not
be politic, in my opinion, to require tribute in this region as of the
present time.

These tribes, which are entirely located in Laotian territory, are
quite tranquil but in continual dread of undertakings by their Djarai
neighbors.

563 5. The great Djarai tribe, which is by far the most important and
most numerous in the estimation of the missionaries. It is said to
include nearly 150,000 inhabitants and is the finest racial type which
I have seen in all the Kha region.

Many villages are subject to our authority and pay the head tax.
Others, such as those which I found in the valley of the Psi and on the
Sesane, obey our orders, keep the roads in repair, receive traders and
travelers with perfect hospitality and will pay tribute whenever we
wish.

563 But there are two groups which are absolutely rebellious to our
[619] penetration. These are: 1) the groups of villages of Pley-Qho and
[643] Pley-Denang immediately south of the mission; and 2), somewhat
579 further to the south, the group of the Sadetes whose two chieftains,
the kings of water and fire, inhabit the points which are marked on
the map as Pa-Tao-Ia and Pa-Tao-Ngo.

563 The first of these groups has continuously committed hostile
668 acts against us. They are the ones who attacked the convoy of M.
726 Navelle when this official came to visit the mission, who have
constantly attacked convoys on the road from Ang-Ke to Kon-Toum,
who more recently robbed a Laotian hunter of merchandise valued at
more than 1,000 piasters and pierced him with sword thrusts, and,
finally, who attacked M. Lacouture and killed one of his guides.
These villages are dreaded by all their neighbors. It was they against
whom Meyréna (1) marched, but his success was not sufficiently

(1) Since I have been led to pronounce the name of the man who
dreamed of creating a Cedang kingdom, I should say a few words
regarding this adventure which seems to me to have been greatly
exaggerated.

272 The following table gives the composition of each of these blends:
 Quality White points Delicate green leaves Large leaves

Quality	White points	Delicate green leaves	Large leaves
1st quality	10%	30%	60%
2nd quality	5	15	80
3rd quality	2	5	93

Preparation. After harvesting the leaves are placed on mats in the sun, where they wither and become soft. They are then slightly torrefied in a copper or cast-iron basin placed over a hot fire. This operation, which lasts only a few moments and during which the leaves are constantly stirred and sifted, is designed to remove all the natural moisture which they contain and thus make sure that they will not spoil later on.

Molding and wrapping. Blends are made when the tea is molded, for the tea of these regions is sold in the form of cakes .25 meter in diameter or of cylinders six or seven centimeters in diameter. The different qualities of leaves are placed within easy reach and the different weights of each kind [154] which will be mixed together to make up a cake or cylinder are measured out. Then the mixing itself is done in marble, cast-iron or wooden molds after the leaves have been exposed to steam for a few seconds. The tea is compressed in the molds, the latter are heated, and when they are opened their contents are dry, hard and homogeneous. The cakes or cylinders are then wrapped in bamboo leaves or leaflets and tied with rattan. A package of tea in the form of cakes includes seven of the latter and weighs 1.2 kilograms.

[157]

APPENDIX XXVIII

REPORT AND REGULATIONS ON SLAVERY

● 567 The problem of slavery for debt is one of the most difficult ones to solve.

177 That of slavery resulting from capture has been solved very easily. The Siamese had already given orders for it to be stopped, and although it still existed in certain provinces, principally in those of Lower Laos, this was due to the fact that the Siamese high mandarins voluntarily closed their eyes, thanks to large sums which were paid to secure their cooperation and which constituted one of their largest sources of income.

As soon as we assumed the administrations of the country the Laotians sounded us out on this subject. They soon realized that our

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[675] upbringing and sentiments rejected the idea of such slavery, and without giving in gracefully, for some of them stood to lose large capital investments, they accepted without question the principle of emancipation of slaves by capture. A few attempted to use subterfuge and tried to pass off slaves who were really slaves by capture as slaves for debt. Fortunately every contract among the Laotian people, whatever it be, is a written one, and examination of these contracts was sufficient to foil all their ruses.

At the present time it may be said that this question has been solved. There are no longer any but voluntary slaves who like their life under their masters and, although free, want to stay there. Nearly all of them, moreover, are provided with a certification of liberation which their masters have forced them to request so that they, the masters, will not be accused later of keeping slaves by force.

Full justice must be given to the Laotian authorities who, although the first to suffer from this measure, have freely aided us in our task.

[726] The reports by the government commissioners have noted the good consequences of the measure. One of its first results was to bring a stop to the inter-tribal warfare among the Khas, warfare whose origin, if not its sole purpose, almost always lay in the capture of human cattle demanded by recognized slave traders [158] who were established in the land--they were mainly Burmese--and who had deliveries to make.

567 As regards slaves for debt, the question is a much more delicate one, for here we are confronted by a voluntary and for the most part uninteresting form of slavery.

In Laos, all crimes and misdemeanors must be paid for. This is the origin of nearly all debts, among the well-to-do as well as among the poorer classes. Among the latter, sentences for stealing buffalo or rice are usually involved, and among the well-to-do sentences for adultery or judicial decisions resulting from unsuccessful speculations. When sentence has been pronounced, money must be found immediately in order to avoid prison. If the borrower can offer security for payment the necessary sum is lent to him at annual interest rates which vary, depending on the province, from ten to twenty percent.

If the borrower is a poor man, he offers his person in payment of the interest and then becomes not the slave, but the servant in a house.

His status is not comparable to that of a slave by capture. Whereas the latter is a veritable beast of burden, often badly mistreated, obliged to work only for his master and to provide himself for his food and clothing, the slave for debts, on the other hand, is fed and

•567 clothed--very simply, to be sure, like the rest of the family--but he is free to work for himself and can free himself quite easily if he is not too lazy. He is not mistreated by his masters and has scarcely any real work to do except during the rainy season at plowing time. As soon as the grain is in the slave for debt, who up to that time has lived in the house in the fields watching over the crop, goes back to town with the family to the houses surrounding those of his master, and if the harvest is a good one he has a good life without anything to do, taking part in all the festivities which go on in the house.

One unusual feature of these customs is that the master seems more to be pitied than the slave. Whereas the latter is free to change masters at will (in order to do so he has only to find a new one who will lend him the sum of money he owes), the latter cannot sell his interest in the slave to anyone else without the slave's consent. Thus if a master has the good fortune to find a good servant he has to treat him with a great deal of consideration, for there are plenty of people around him who would like to find a good one too. (Extract from a report by the Superior Commandant in Lower Laos.)

REGULATIONS GOVERNING SLAVERY FOR DEBT
(March 29, 1896)

567
656 ARTICLE 1. Any man or woman who borrows a sum of money may, if not under fifteen or over fifty years old, engage his or her person in order to acquit the contracted debt.

[159] Such an engagement, which is an absolutely personal one, shall not be contracted for a sum greater than eighty ticals (one cattle).

ART. 2. A sum of six ticals for men and four ticals for women shall be deducted from the debt each year towards payment in full.

ART. 3. Any non-indentured wife living with her husband while the latter is a slave shall be fed and supported under the same conditions as her husband, and each year the latter's debt shall be decreased by a sum of four ticals representing the voluntary labor of the wife.

ART. 4. Children of slaves shall be free of all debts contracted by their parents.

Until they reach the age of fifteen they shall be bound to serve their parents' master in payment for food and effects given them. After the age of fifteen they shall be entirely free. If they agree to remain with their parents and serve their parents' master, their consent

- 567 must be specified in a special contract signed by them. In this case
656 their work will go toward payment of their parents' debt at the rate of six ticals per year for boys and four ticals for girls.

ART. 5. If a slave dies his debt is considered paid and is not transferable to any of his relatives.

[57] ART. 6. A master is held responsible for payment of the head tax on any dutiable slave.

If the latter cannot secure the necessary sum through his own labor the master shall pay, but any such sum shall be added to the principal debt and mention thereof shall be made on the contract of debt by the authorities responsible for collecting the head tax.

426 ART. 7. Any individual who borrows money shall present him-
567 self with the lender to the highest native authority in his territory,
656 who alone is empowered to certify debtor's notes.

The native authorities shall retain a duplicate of such debtor's notes; such notes shall be signed by both lender and borrower and invested with the seals of the authorities.

Notes shall be drawn up in ink and any crossings-out or additions approved.

ART. 8. For sums less than twenty ticals, the high authorities of a Muong may delegate their powers to the Tassengs or Phobans.

ART. 9. The provisions of this decree shall take effect immediately. Sons and grandsons of slaves for debt who have reached or passed the age of fifteen shall be regarded as free upon promulgation of these provisions. The same shall be true of persons under contract against their will, who shall have the right to have the contract which binds them revised in the presence of the French authorities.